

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

A CASE STUDY OF OMANI ENGLISH-LANGUAGE
INSTRUCTORS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH AND
TOWARDS NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH IN AN OMANI
UNIVERSITY

A dissertation submitted by Christopher James Denman

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Abstract

Interaction with a second or foreign language is often assumed to necessitate exposure to the socio-cultural values associated with that language's dominant social group/s. Such interaction may therefore be experienced as a means of expanding an individual's worldview. However, it may also lead to a sense of tension or even alienation for those who find the values transmitted by the new language incongruous with their own. Within the context of the six current member nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a number of theorists maintain that learners of English within the region may experience negative responses and attitudes based on a supposed incongruity between the Western values associated with the language and Arab-Muslim identity. Research into the attitudes of Gulf citizens towards the English language and its native speakers, however, suggests a far more complicated picture. The current case study of Omani English-language instructors of English at a university in the Gulf nation of Oman, therefore, investigated participants' attitudes towards the English language, their attitudes towards the place of English in Oman, and their attitudes towards native speakers of English. A mixed qualitative-quantitative research design, incorporating documentary analysis of government-produced texts regarding English in higher education in Oman, a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 21 Omani tertiary-level English-language instructors and semi-structured interviews conducted with eight such participants, was employed. Findings suggested that participants held somewhat positive attitudes towards the English language and its place in Omani society, with emphasis often placed on the way access to the language can be a source of empowerment. Moreover, results indicated that participants largely believed English allowed them to express their own individual values and concerns, and thus their knowledge of English was not incompatible with their Arab and/or Muslim traditions and beliefs. However, attitudes towards native speakers of English were far more mixed, with neutral attitudes in this area characterising questionnaire responses and slightly more positive attitudes typically emerging from the semi-structured interviews.

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor/s Date

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